

**Specification Amendments**

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 14,  
paragraph 0028 with the following rewritten paragraph:

0028       According to the prior art, nitrogen was present at relatively low levels in the ambient for producing a plasma i.e., a dilute reaction gas typically with minimal flow rates of about 10-20 sccm. In contrast, according to the present invention, it has been unexpectedly found that a higher nitrogen containing ambient, for instance, in the range of about 50 to 300 sccm, and a nitrogen to oxygen ratio of at least 5 gave superior results for etching via and contact holes especially in smaller dimensional semiconductor structures of 0.13 microns and below.